

said, by the conversion of South-sea common into an agreeable park, by Lord F. Fitzclarence, and others, with the Clarence esplanade crowning the beach, and now a favourite promenade. —Two new veins of coal, between 5 and 6 feet thick, have been discovered in the parish of Radstock, on the Countess of Waldegrave's property, by Mr. Charles Ashman, the engineer and manager of her ladyship's other mines. The poor people in the parish are in joyful anticipation of employment, and general rejoicing has been manifested by the ringing of bells, &c. —A Liverpool paper says, with reference to the Birkenhead Docks, "It is now certain that these works must go on. The contract has been signed, sealed, and delivered," and on Thursday the dock trustees held meetings for the purpose of arranging the details of the works." —The guardians of the Wincanton Union have accepted the tender of Messrs. Miles and Golding, of Shaftesbury, for the enlargement of their workhouse. There were five tenders given in for the work, and the difference between the highest and lowest was 316*l.*; the one accepted being 530*l.*, and the highest from a builder at Frome, 846*l.* —Mr. Walker, engineer, and Mr. May, the resident engineer, have surveyed the whole line of the Caledonian Canal from end to end. Every part of the canal, from the summit level westward, is said to have been in good order. —The Glasgow Harbour works at Springfield have been rather seriously interfered with by a heavy flooding in the Clyde, which filled the excavations. The new line of quay, however, is in an advanced state of progress.

METROPOLITAN COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

A GENERAL court was held on Thursday last, the 15th, at the Sewers Court, Greek-street, Soho-square; Lord Ebrington, M.P. in the chair. On the recommendation of the finance committee, several payments were ordered, and amongst the rest, a cheque was directed to be placed in the hands of Mr. Groom, the official assignee in bankruptcy, for the amount due to Mr. Starkie, the contractor for the Grosvenor-square sewer, from the late Commissioners of Sewers, prior to his bankruptcy. This long-litigated affair will now be brought to a close on the solicitors of this court receiving a satisfactory acknowledgment of the sum. All the real business of the commission seems now to be done snugly and quietly in committee, a system against which, when in the old Westminster commission, one at all events of the present commissioners was in the habit of protesting pretty constantly and loudly, —whether rightly or wrongly we do not stop now to inquire. The new Sewers Act appears to be very defective in several points, and is felt to be so by the Commissioners. Those who drew it up don't exactly understand the operation of some parts of it; so, unless we are wrongly informed, other opinions have been sought.

ENCROACHMENT ON THE NEW ROAD, ISLINGTON.

METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENTS.

REGRETTING equally with your correspondent "Vlator," that the line of this road is being constantly trespassed upon by the erection of buildings upon the fore-courts of the houses, I am sure he cannot be aware of the various attempts that have been made from time to time to prevent this great evil, or he would have thrown his sarcasm upon the parties who have really caused an Act of Parliament, intended for the protection of this line of road, to become totally inoperative, rather than have censured the parochial vestries, who have neither foolishly nor culpably neglected their duties, but have endeavoured to enforce the law, though without avail, the magistrates refusing to convict. Further, the very parties who should have supported them have been the first to infringe its regulations, as may be seen in the instances of the Park Crescent, York-place, &c., which were advanced beyond the prescribed limit by the Commissioners of Woods, &c.; and latterly the official referees defined the line of frontage of two public buildings as being 60 feet back from the footway, while a few months

subsequently these gentlemen came to a resolution to allow these erections on the fore-courts one story in height in roads 60 feet in width, —and, consequently, a few hundred yards off, two private buildings are now in course of erection at the western end, adjoining the Edgeware-road, as well as those referred to by your correspondent near Osanberg-street. So much for the protection of the public interests to be derived from central commissioners, whom your correspondent is so enamoured of, who to-day undo that which they have given effect to on the previous one. I am quite satisfied the parochial vestries of this metropolis have public spirit enough to place themselves above private interests, and only require the aid of the administrators of the law to maintain inviolate the powers vested in them, but which, unfortunately, is rarely given where the public interests are concerned, thereby aiding the designs of those whose interests it is to advance centralization, to the prejudice of the great fundamental law of this country, —local self-government. C. E.

THE COST OF THE CITY AND SURREY GAOLS.

If we were to print some of the comments we have received on this matter generally, they would displease more persons than one, and so far as we can see would do no good. Considerable surprise is expressed as to the difference of cost between the two prisons. The Surrey prison, to be built on Wandsworth-common, is to contain, as we understand, 790 cells, including chapel, laundry, boundary walls, and airing-grounds. The city prison, to be built at Holloway, is to contain 500 cells, chapel, laundry, and boundary walls. The Surrey prison is to cost 130*l.* per cell, and the city of London 184*l.* per cell. How is this difference made? say some. Some part of it is to be attributed to the introduction of masonry in the city prison; and it may be that more fittings are included in one than the other.

The difference between the highest and the lowest tenders, 17,410*l.* in one, and 11,720*l.* in the other, sounds large, especially as it was made wholly in the pricing, —the quantities being supplied: but looked at as a percentage on the amount, it is not so great as is often the case. The lowest tender for the city may be called 16 per cent. less than the highest, and that for the Surrey prison rather more than 10 per cent. One of our correspondents says that the charge made by the surveyors for taking out the quantities for the city prisons, including lithographing the bills, was 2,824*l.* The 2*½* per cent. pays better than the 5.

THE RIVER-WALL OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

A FEW days since, in passing over Westminster Bridge, my attention was drawn to the works now in progress for the purpose of removing the dam in front of the new palace. I was not a little surprised to observe that the piles forming the dam were being drawn. On a closer inspection I observed that these piles were a distance of at least 16 feet in the ground. Now it struck me as being a most ill-advised plan to draw these timbers at all, inasmuch as the operation amounts to cutting a trench, or rather two trenches, there being two rows of piles, the whole length of the river frontage, and 16 feet deep, which I am disposed to think, with that unfortunate spectacle Westminster Bridge before one's eyes, is, to say the least, running an unnecessary risk. Moreover, as there is no good end served, I cannot conceive what can have been the motive for drawing the piles instead of cutting them off level with the proposed ground line, which every practical man knows could have been done at an expense of certainly not more than 500*l.* or 600*l.* over the present method, and there would then have been scarcely a possibility of the river frontage ever being injured, inasmuch as the timber left in the ground would have afforded an additional security in the event of the present bridge being removed, and another erected in all probability on a fresh site, which is as likely to cause an alteration in the set of the tide, and thereby to

deepen the river bed, as did the removal of the old London Bridge.

I repeat, that without any end served, it is a matter of astonishment that the present course should have been pursued. I am aware that there is a line of piles at the foot of the river wall intended as a protection, but still the fact of disturbing a mass of ground to such a depth (to the bottom of the sheet piling) within a few feet of the wall, is most undesirable. True, no immediate injury may result, but look at the bridge. I have no doubt, that when that structure was completed, it was deemed a substantial erection; but what has time proved it to be? And it may fairly be said, that a little foresight would have prevented its present deplorable appearance and a large outlay of money. Gain experience from the past: a motto which in this instance is deserving particular attention. T.

MISCELLANEA.

ISLINGTON MARKET.—This market was built by the late Mr. John Perkins, about fifteen years since, having obtained an Act of Parliament, which gives the power of holding the market, of slaughtering cattle, melting the fat for tallow, manufacturing the offal, &c. The area within the walls is 15 acres, and for the sake of comparison, to enable any one to judge of its extent, we will quote Russell-square, which contains 11 A. 1 R. to the walls of the houses, and Lincoln's-inn Fields contains 10 A. 1 R. 29 P. There is accommodation for 6,000 head of cattle and 50,000 sheep, besides layers having 3,250 feet in length of roof, or nearly 2 acres. The extent of freehold property, upon which there are thirty houses, is 7 acres, exclusive of the market, and 7 acres leasehold, upon which it is intended to erect abattoirs and a dead-meat market. A main public sewer passes within 300 feet of the eastern entrance, and it is 16 feet lower than the surface of the market. The East and West India Dock Railway passes to within 400 yards of the market.

ARTESIAN WELL AT HADHAM.—I observe in the last number of THE BUILDER, that a correspondent wishes to know if it be practicable to fix a lifting pump in an Artesian bore of 6 inches diameter, the water level of the spring being 176 feet from the surface: such an operation is possible; it is obvious the rod should be arranged and steadied inside the rising main. The bucket and clacks require periodical examination; means of access to them should therefore be provided; indeed, facilities should be given for removing the whole pump, combined with perfect readiness when fixed: it is almost needless to remark the pump must on no account choke up the bore. These matters require care in detail, and should be directed by a professional man. —JOHN G. SWINDELL, 3, Kilburn Priory.

IMPROVEMENTS IN PARIS.—For completing the Louvre the estimates are—for the ground required for completing the Louvre, 6,379,250*fr.*; for the buildings and other works, 23,000,000*fr.*; and for the continuation of the Rue de Rivoli, 3,119,630*fr.* The Municipal Council have come to the resolution that the city should contribute the 3,119,630*fr.* towards the continuation of the Rue de Rivoli. The plans for the new buildings comprise the establishment of the National Library, in the wing to be constructed towards the Rue de Rivoli, special galleries for the annual exhibition of the works of modern painters and sculptors, and for the periodical exhibition of the products of the useful arts, next the gallery of the Museum; and the formation of an intermediate quadrangle, with a colossal fountain in the centre, surrounded by four quincunxes, ornamented with statues.

ORSI AND ARMANI'S METALLIC LAVA.—Of this material for paving we have already spoken briefly without offering any opinion on its merits, time being necessary to decide there. It would really seem, however, well deserving examination and to have many advantages, especially in places where the surface of other floorings would be made moist and mouldy by rising damp. Messrs. Orsi and Armani have produced from our pages, in their black and white lava, some of the mosaics from Pompeii, which we gave in a recent number (page 3).